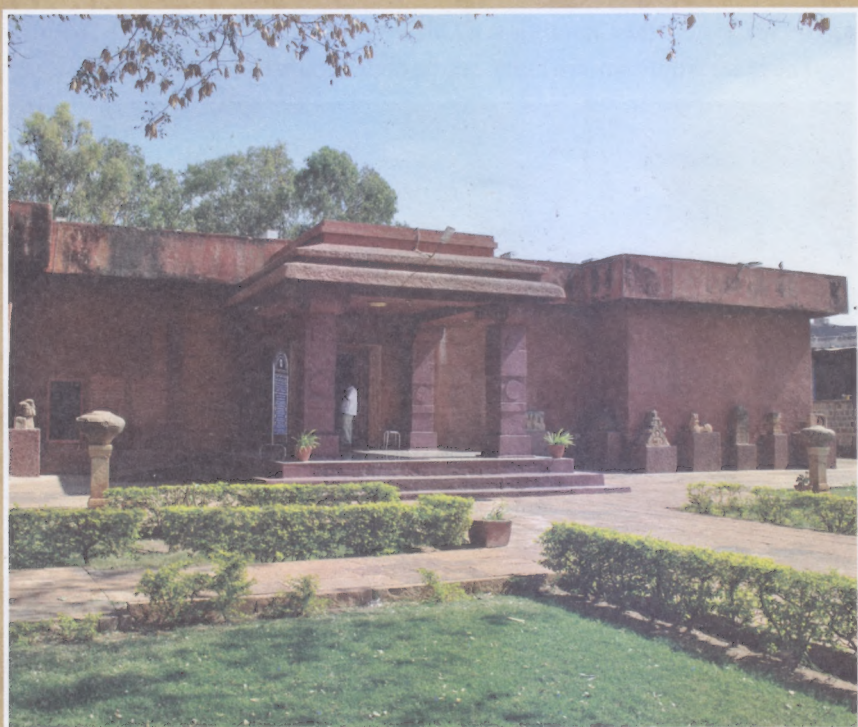




# AIHOLE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM



प्रत्नकीर्तिगपावृणु

Archaeological Museum  
**AIHOLE**

Archaeological Survey of India  
Dharwad Circle, DHARWAD

## INTRODUCTION

**A**ihole, is located in Hungund taluk of Bagalkot district in northern Karnataka. It is a small village, but now a well known tourist place. Situated on the bank of the river Malaprabha, Aihole was the cultural capital during the period of the Western *Chālukya* dynasty of Badami (543–757 CE).

The town had trading and administrative importance with a guild known as *Ayyavoḷe Ainūruvār*, (a guild of 500 elders) mentioned in numerous ancient inscriptions.

The ancient temples at Aihole, show various early stages in the development of temple building tradition in central Deccan, which became a precursor to the temple building tradition of south India. They show an unbroken sequence of temple building activity during the periods of the *Badami Chālukya*-s (543-757 CE), the succeeding *Raṣṭrakūṭa*-s of *Mālkhed* (757-950 CE) and the *Chālukya*-s of *Kalyāṇa* (950-1250 CE).

The place is aptly known as the cradle of the South Indian Architecture.



*Plaster cast model of temple town of Aihole on river Malaprabha, in the museum.*

### The legend

The name *Ayyavoḷal* is derived from *Āryavoḷal* or *Āryapura* (the valley of the elders). In the local language, it is known as *Aivaḷli/Aihoḷli*.

In an interesting legend, *Paraśhurāma*, after killing the *kṣatriya*-s, is said to have washed his axe in the Malaprabha river. The waters of the river turned red due to blood, causing the people to exclaim, '*Ai Hoḷi*' (Ai, the river). Hence the name *Aiholi*.



The *Śātavāhana* dynasty (100 BCE to early part of 300 CE) ruled both the western and the eastern sea coast of the Indian peninsula. They were succeeded by the *Kadamba* (west coast), *Gaṇga* (south Karnataka) and the *Pallava* (Tamil Nadu) dynasties who were contemporaries of the *Bādāmi Chālukya*-s who occupied Central Deccan, the Karnataka heartland.

The *Bādāmi Chālukya* dynasty was founded by *Pulakeśhi* - I (543-566 CE) with *Vātāpi* - *Bādāmi* as the capital. This powerful dynasty ruled the Deccan for nearly two centuries (543-757 CE). *Pulakeśhi* - II (610-642 CE) led a campaign to south India and attacked the *Pallava* capital, Kanchipuram (Tamilnadu). He defeated King *Harshavardhana* of Kannauj, and captured areas upto Narmada river (Maharashtra).



His brother *Viśṇuvardhana*, established the dynasty of the *Chālukya*-s of *Veṅgi*, in Andhra Pradesh. His last brother, *Dharāśhraya-Jayasinhha*, established the kingdom of the *Chaulukya*-s of Gujarat. These political conflicts had a positive effect on the exchange of architectural and sculptural styles which can be seen in the *Bādāmi Chālukyan* heartland.

After ruling for nearly two centuries the *Bādāmi Chālukya* monarchs succumbed to the newly emerging power of the *Rāṣṭrakūṭa* dynasty (757-950 CE).

## The Temple building tradition in the Deccan

There was a lot of temple building activity in brick, lime mortar and timber before the dynasty of the *Śātavāhana*-s (before 100 BCE). The buried foundations of brick temples, excavated at Aihole and Pattadakal, testify to this established temple building tradition.

The biggest share of *Śātavāhana* artistic movement is in Maharashtra (west coast) and Andhra (east coast). There are numerous Buddhist rock-cut caves, at Ajanta, Bhaja, Karla, Pitalkhora, Kanheri, Junnar etc. in Maharashtra and Buddhist brick *Stūpa* and monasteries at Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, Jaggayyapeta etc. in Andhra Pradesh.

The *Śātavāhana*-s had got rock cut caves carved and structural *stūpa*-s and monasteries built only to serve Buddhism. There was no space for Vedic or Puranic gods.

It is after the *Śātavāhana* period (between 400-800 CE), that the architectural activity, started representing Hindu and Jain religious affiliation, seen in the carving of caves at Ellora, Aurangabad, Elephanta in Maharashtra,

Badami and Aihole in Karnataka. In this context, the *Rāvaḷaphaḍi* cave and Jain cave at Aihole should not be missed.

The earliest remains of structural temples, in stone, are found at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, belonging to the period of the *Ikṣhvāku* dynasty (between 300-400 CE) who succeeded the *Śātavāhana*-s in the eastern Deccan. The rise of the Hindu nobility to influential positions in the *Ikṣhvāku* kingdom resulted in construction of temples dedicated to *Kārtikeya*, *Sarvadeva* (*Śhiva*), *Aṣṭabhujaśwāmī* and *Puṣhpabhadraśwāmī* at Nagarjunakonda.

Aihole, which is situated close to the eastern Deccan, inherited the earliest traditions of temple building in stone and developed on it, under the active patronage of the *Bādāmi Chālukya* rulers (543-757 CE). Various experimental stages can be seen in the Northern Indian (*Nagara*) and Southern Indian (*Drāviḍa*) temple building styles that converged at Aihole. A tradition (*Pharisaṇa*) of stepped pyramidal temple building style also developed.

Temple complexes at Aihole, Badami, Mahakuta and Pattadakal have several temples in these traditions.

## THE MUSEUM

The Archaeological Museum is located behind the *Durgā* Temple, in the *Durgā* temple complex. It was originally planned as a sculpture shed in 1970 to collect and exhibit the sculptures, inscriptions and architectural members found by way of exploration, excavation in and around Aihole. It was converted in to a full-fledged museum in the year 1987, and extended in the year 2000.

### The collection in the Museum

The purpose of the *Chālukya*-s, to build monument in the mid-Deccan was to systematically popularize *Śhaiva*, *Vaiṣṇava* and *Jaina* religions in their domain.

The museum has a rich collection of sculptures belonging to the period of the *Bādāmi Chālukya*-s (543-757 CE), the succeeding *Rāṣṭrakūṭa*-s of *Maḷkhed* (757-950 CE) and the *Chālukya*-s of *Kalyāṇa* (950-1250 CE).

Jainism is represented by sculptures of *Tirthaṅkara*, *Yakṣha* and *Yakṣhi*. *Yakṣha* and *Yakṣhi* are male and female deities attendant upon each *Tirthaṅkara*.





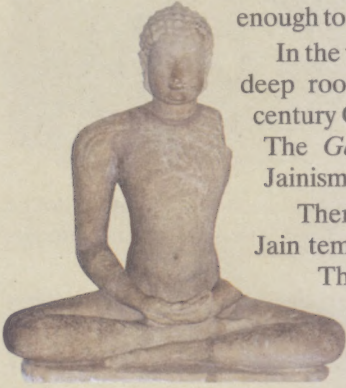
Immediately in front of the entrance, is displayed the most beautiful sculpture of *Kūṣhmāṇḍi Yakṣhi*, dated to late 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. *Kūṣhmāṇḍi* or *Ambikā*, is a female attendant of *Neminātha*, the 22<sup>nd</sup> *Tīrthaṅkara*. She is also known as *Āmra-yakṣhi*. Here she is supposed to be sitting under a (*Āmra*) mango tree. The leaves are similar to mango leaves but the shape of the fruit is unusual. She is worshipped as a mother goddess.



In course of developments in Jainism, *Yakṣha*-s and *Yakṣhi*-s, assumed far greater importance, next only to that of the *Tīrthaṅkara*-s. By the time of the *Bādāmi Chālukya*-s the religious practices had become complex

enough to include worship of *Yakṣha*-s and *Yakṣhi*-s also.

In the western half of the Deccan, Jainism had grown deep roots. Evidence suggests that by middle of 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, Jainism was well established in Karnataka. The *Gaṅga*-s and the *Kadamba*-s had patronized Jainism.



There are two important *Jaina* edifices at Aihole. Jain temple on the Meguti hill, visible from far away.

The sculpture of *Kūṣhmāṇḍi*, kept in the museum, was brought from this temple. On the northern wall of this temple is an important inscription in Sanskrit (dated 634 CE) of minister *Ravikīrti*, in the reign of

*Pulakeśhi* II. The minister, who must have been a poet of repute, compares himself with *Kaṣīdāsa* and *Bhāravi*. Contemporary inscriptions prove that Sanskrit had achieved prominence, but Kannada Language had remained popular among the people.

The *Jain* cave is on the south western tip of the Meguti hill. It is visible to the right, when visitors coming from Badami, cross a bridge, just before entering the village of Aihole. Images of *Bāhubali* and *Pārśhvanātha* are beautifully carved on opposite walls of the front rectangular hall. The ceiling of the front hall and inner chamber is intricately carved.

The Buddha image in gallery No. I, seated on a throne, in *Padmāsana*, is from the two







storeyed, Buddhist temple at Aihole, which is situated near the steps, leading to the Meguti temple.

The numerous sculptures of Hindu religion represent various sects like *Śhaiva*, *Vaiṣṇava*, *Saurya*, *Gāṇapatya*, *Skanda Kārtikeya*, *Harīti* and *Saptamātrkā*.

The *Śhaiva* images displayed in the museum are *Bhikṣhātana Śhiva*, *Naṭarāja*, *Ardhanārīśvara*, *Gajāsuraavadha*, and *Pārvati*, *Śhiva*'s consort is represented as *Mahiśāsura-mardini*.

Numerous individual images of seated *Gaṇapati*, found at Aihole, testify to a strong cult of the *Gāṇapatya*, who considered *Gaṇapati* as the supreme god.



The cult associated with *Skanda-Kārtikeya* as *Mahāsena*, the commander of the army of the gods, goes back to an early period. At Aihole, *Kārtikeya* images have been mostly depicted on architectural members.

A number of images of *Saptamātrkā* (seven divine mothers) have been found at Aihole. The seven mothers are *Brāhmaṇī*, *Māheśwarī*, *Kaumārī*, *Vaiṣṇavī*, *Vārāhī*, *Indrāṇī* and *Chāmūṇḍā*. They are accompanied by *Śhiva* or *Gāṇapati*. The worship of *Saptamātrkā*-s is associated with *Śhakti* worship, the female principle in *Tāntrik* form of Hinduism.

A separate cult of the *Saurya* (Sun worshippers) must have been popular at Aihole. Images of *Sūrya*, holding lotus (symbolic of the Sun in Hindu mythology) in both the hands have been found. A shrine dedicated to *Sūryanārāyaṇa* is situated very near to the *Laḍkhan* temple, with a life size image of *Surya*.



Sculptures with upper body of a human and lower portion of a serpent, indicate a *Nāga* cult of snake worshippers. *Nāga*-s are believed to reside in the underworld (*Pātāla*). *Nāga*-s are worshipped for fertility and child bearing.

Royal Patronage boosted the popularity of the ancient Vedic religion and Vedic ceremonies like the *Ashvamedha*, *Agniṣṭhoma* and *Vājapeya* sacrifices (*Yajña*).



*Durgā-Guḍī*



*Rāvalaphaḍī cave*



*Rāvalaphaḍī cave - interior*





*Jain cave*



*Jain cave - interior*



*Viragallu - Hero stone*



*Lad Khan Temple*



\* Nearly Thirty years in the life of Jesus Christ remains historically a blank period, when his whereabouts were not known, hence BCE – Before Christian Era, and CE – Christian Era – are terms more acceptable for precise dating. The term AD in use earlier, stood for Anno Domini Nostri Jesu Christi (In the year of our Lord - in latin language) or simply Anno Domini.



प्रत्यक्षीरितगणवृणु

Assistant Superintending Archaeologist  
Archaeological Survey of India  
Archaeological Museum, AIHOLE - 587 124  
Dist: Bagalkot, Karnataka State, India.

Tel: 08357-220157  
mus.aihole@gmail.com

Museum remains open on all days except Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.  
Free entry for children below 15 years  
Entry Fee: ₹5/-

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